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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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RFMEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Preliminary Analysis of Iraqi-USSR Treaty

On April 9 the Soviet Union and Iraq signed in Baghdad a fifteen-year "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation." The Treaty, signed on behalf of the USSR by Premier Kosygin, pledges the two countries to cooperate in the political, economic, scientific and military fields, but the commitments are even less specific than the general pledges contained in the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of May 1971. For example, the article calling for developing "cooperation in the field of strengthening the defensive capabilities of each" is less forthcoming than the undertakings agreed upon last May between the Soviet Union and Egypt.

Concerning the Arab-Israeli problem, the only Soviet concession to Iraqi sensibilities was the assertion that the two parties "will continue to wage unrelenting struggle against imperialism and Zionism." On the other hand, Iraq, which so far has rejected Security Council Resolution 242, moved closer to accepting the principle of a negotiated Middle East settlement; it agreed to preambular language which stated that both parties were, "Firmly convinced that in the contemporary world international problems must be solved by cooperation and by seeking solutions acceptable to the parties concerned..." For the Iraqi Ba'athis, this is moderate language.

The Iraqi-USSR treaty symbolizes recent Soviet advances in the area and reflects the considerable and increasing Soviet presence in Iraq. This presence, which complements the Soviet position in Egypt, has been in the form of strong political ties, continuing military assistance and large-scale Soviet economic assistance. In the latter respect

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Kosygin's participation in ceremonies marking the start of production in the rich North Rumaila oil field reflects the special Soviet effort to gain influence over much of the Iraqi oil complex in order to assure the Soviets of alternative sources of oil for their markets in Western and Eastern Europe.

While Brezhnev made pact signing a part of his program announced at the 24th Soviet Party Congress in March of 1971 and the USSR has recently signed treaties with Egypt and India, it appears that Iraq instigated treaty discussions. Saddam Hussein, the strong man of Iraq, has alienated important segments of the Iraqi body politic and to a great extent has been isolated from the Arab mainstream. In signing a treaty with the Soviets he has sought to enhance the legitimacy of his position and has served notice to his opponents that he has formalized outside support. From the Soviet viewpoint, the Treaty fits into a series of recent moves to consolidate and demonstrate their position in the Arab world, undoubtedly taken with at least one eye on the forthcoming Moscow Summit.

Kosygin has emphasized that the treaty is not aimed at another country. In so doing Kosygin no doubt intended to reassure Iran about Soviet intentions, for ideally the Soviets would like to improve relations with both Baghdad and Tehran simultaneously. In fact they have reached a situation, in the light of Iraqi-Iranian rivalry, where it is difficult to improve relations with one without adversely affecting relations with the other. It is possible that the Soviets will endeavor to overcome this difficulty by seeking to persuade the Iranians that the Treaty in fact will enable the Soviets to persuade the Iraqis to exercise restraint vis-a-vis Iran. However, the Treaty will put a strain on the Soviet-Iranian relationship, which has been fairly good recently. The Shah will see the Treaty as another major Soviet achievement and as confirmation of his fears about long-term Soviet intentions in the area.


Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
for Executive Secretary

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